JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
A DESTRUCTIVE SIGNAL

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If since the beginning, Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) had entered Indonesia just as other denominations did without being intimidated by the government, then perhaps they would only have had a small number of churches just like Mormon and Christian Science. Furthermore, if only Protestant churches had taught their members about the misleading doctrines of JW, perhaps this movement would only have gathered a small number of followers.

But the Protestants took a wrong policy, in which they used the hand of government to prevent this movement from operating openly. This forced them to operate underground. In the end, it was no longer a secret that the members of this movement walked two by two visiting Christians' homes, questioning their faith, and spreading their doctrines. The result is that their number becomes so astounding and their network extensive.

The habit of using the hand of government was not only ineffective but also proved that the users of it did not have any counter argumentations against this movement. Furthermore, it also created a challenge to this movement to fight harder. It's better for the churches who think themselves more biblical than JW to hold seminars or publish tracts and booklets in order to strengthen the faith of their congregations and explain the false doctrines of JW.

A Short History of Jehovah's Witnesses

Charles Taze Russell was born on February 16, 1852, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Since he was a teenager, he opposed the belief on the existence of hell as a punishment for people. He also opposed religious institution (church). At the age of 18, in 1870, he gathered people to study bible, and in 1878, his study bible group appointed him as Pastor.

From 1876 until 1878, Russell worked as an assistant editor in a monthly magazine in Rochester, New York. He then quit his job because of the controversy of his writing about *Christ's Salvation*. After leaving his job, he published *The Herald of the Morning* (1879), which today became *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom*. This publication was started with 6,000 copies only. Today, it is printed in 20 million copies and translated to more than 100 languages. Other publication from *Watchtower* with the title *Awake!* is printed more than 15 million copies and translated to more than 30 languages.

But C.T. Russell, being a very confident person, even though he attended school only until 7th grade, tried his best to teach and to lead. It was no wonder that his teaching was a partial truth and not a complete harmonious truth that can be interpreted from all verses in the Bible and is based on the true meaning of each word in its original language.

In June 1912, the Bishop of James Street Baptist Church in Hamilton, Ontario, Rev. J. J. Ross, published a pamphlet that described the immoral life and the superficial theological knowledge of C.T. Russell. Of course, Russell was furious and sued Ross to court on the charges of discrediting him. But, unexpected by Russell, this case became a boomerang that caused him further humiliation. It's because the court's verdict was in favor to Ross, since all that he wrote about Russell proved to be accurate. It was true that Russell was not a very good husband and head of the family, since he was divorced. It was also true that he did not attend any university, learn theology formally, nor understand Hebrew or Greek languages.

The funny thing was that when Russell was asked whether he understood Greek, he answered yes. But when the lawyer opened a Greek bible and asked him to read the topmost word, he admitted that he could not do it. Of course all the people in the court room exploded in laughter. He finally had to admit, with great humiliation of course, that he did not understand Greek. [Walter Marth, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany Hose Publishers, 1985, pp. 42-47].

Another surprising fact was that Russell was never ordained by any organizations but he called himself, and his followers called him, "Pastor." Walter Marth said that as a preacher, he fascinated many people, but as a theologian, his charm did not work on anyone, especially learned theologians. He did not have a theological argumentation with strong base. But, solely depending on his wits, speculations, cleverness in playing words, he bravely made statements and taught many doctrines which were in conflict with the doctrines of most churches without sufficient argumentation.

In the publication of *Watchtower* on September 15, 1910, page 298, Russell stated that it was enough for people to read his writings without reading the Bible since his writings have explained the Bible and even had the same authority as the Bible. He told his followers that they were unable to understand the Bible clearly, but he was able to, so he would explain it to them. According to Russell, if all people agreed with his teachings then the human race would immediately enter a kingdom full of peace. His teachings gained momentum since not long after that there was a conflict that resulted in the World War I. He even became more famous since many people suffered depression after WWI.

After his death, on October 31, 1916, the *Watchtower Society* was lead by Joseph Franklin Rutherford, a judge in Boonville town, Missouri. He was a great writer. In his life he wrote more than a hundred books. Besides Russell, Rutherford was the best contributor in developing the false teachings of JW. At the time of Russell, his organization was not yet called JW. This name was introduced at the time of Rutherford. He then died on January 8, 1942 in California because of cancer.

Immediately after the death of Rutherford, they chose Nathan Homer Knorr as the president of JW. Knorr was a rector from Gilead Missionary Training School (GMTS), in New York. The teachings of GMTS were not based on the Bible, since it only served as the training center for an army of booksellers who went from door to door. This school would not produce a theologian who could think by himself, but only a theologian who depended on the writings of his leader in the form of books and tracts. Knorr died in June 1977. The leadership of JW then passed on to Frederick W. Franz, a well known member in the JW society.

Deviation in Their Teachings

We are very sorry for the people who give themselves to the teachings of a person who never attended any theological schools, who could not read the Bible in its original language, and who suffered a kind of pressure during his childhood that made him declared that there was no such thing such as hell. It is not my intention to declare that anyone who never attend theological school or anyone who cannot read the Bible in its original language can never interpret the Bible correctly. However, if someone bravely makes a conclusion which is in contrast with the opinion of the majority, that person has to have a very strong foundation. His or her conclusion has to be based on the original language of the Bible since the translated Bible contains the risk of changes in meaning related to the riches of that language which is different from one to the other.

The teachings of JW are the result of misinterpretation of many Bible verses. They are like a communism school of thought which is indoctrinated by the leaders to their followers so intensively and systematically that the followers of JW hold fast to those teachings just like the communists hold fast to their belief.

First of all, their name, Jehovah's Witnesses, shows their lack of understanding about the biblical concept of Christianity. The name of Jehovah was the name chosen by The Creator as the name (symbol) of Himself when He introduced Himself to human beings, especially to the Israelites. After the fall of man to sin, human race could no longer live side by side with The Most Holy One. Sin must be dealt with, and the settlement of sin is through punishment. God promised to send a savior, who will bear the punishment deserved by humans. Before that savior came, God ordered a symbolic worship to describe Him and His promise. In relation to that symbolic worship, the name of Jehovah was given as a symbol that pointed to The Creator.

When God's promise to send a Savior was fulfilled at the coming of Christ, who is also God Himself, He did not use the name of Jehovah, but instead He used the name of "Jesus," which means Savior. If JW members understand this truth, they should name their movement as Jesus' Witnesses, not JW. If they wanted to be JW, then they should have been born before God's promise of a Savior was fulfilled.

Second, there is a misunderstanding about Jesus who is God clothed in human body. There are many verses in the Bible, not just one or two, which are directly or indirectly state that Jesus the Savior is The Creator or Jehovah Himself.

When John the Baptist was asked about who he truly was, he said that he was not the Messiah, but he was "the voice of one crying the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a way for our **God**" (Isaiah 40:3). The Hebrew word for **God** in this verse is Jehovah. Who was meant by Isaiah as Jehovah whose way was to be prepared by John the Baptist? It was Jesus Christ, the One who introduced Himself with the name of Jehovah in the Old Testament, and then introduced Himself with the name of Jesus in the New Testament. The difference is that when He introduced Himself as Jehovah, He did it in the middle of the tempest and thunders, while when He introduced Himself as Jesus, He did it through human birth and the natural growing process of a man. When John

the Baptist stated that he came to prepare the way for Jesus, he quoted Isaiah 40:3, thus he stated that Jesus was the Jehovah who came clothed in human flesh.

To whom is this verse pointed, “For unto as a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, **Counselor**, **The mighty God**, **The everlasting Father**, **The Prince of Peace**” (Isaiah 9: 6), if not to Jesus.

And in the New Testament, I John 5:20 clearly states that Jesus is God (theos), “. . . in his Son Jesus Christ. **This is the true God**, and eternal life. How come that someone who is honest and faithful to the Word of God can conclude that Jesus is Christ is not God incarnate?

But this is the belief that was created by Russell who claimed that he based it on the Bible, although in fact he only based it on several verses that expose Christ’s humanity and used it to build a community of followers who was then named by Rutherford as JW. Because his followers always receive challenges from the people who understand the Bible, and because many times they were at loss to respond to these, so later on, this movement publishes its own Bible both in USA and in Indonesia. They manipulate the words of the Bible to conform to their belief then publish this “modified” version of the Bible.

One of the JW followers told the writer that he could not find other well organized Christian organizations besides JW. Therefore, based on this fact, he gladly believed that JW teaches truth. But this thinking is very dangerous. Russian communism under Stalin and Lenin or Chinese communism under Mao were very well organized, and so is Catholic church under the Papacy system. Does this fact justify that what they teach is truth? The problem is, of course, not on the “well organized” aspect of the organization, but on the conformity to what the Bible says. It should not be **partial** conformity, but it should be **complete** conformity instead.

According to Walter Martin, in the book *The Kingdom of the Cults*, JW bravely manipulated the main themes of Christian doctrines such as by teaching that there was no Hell, although in the Bible God said more about Hell than Heaven. God solemnly warn human about Hell so that He said “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into **hell**. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into **hell**” (Matthew 5:29-30). But JW denied the very existence of hell, perhaps in order not to scare their members.

Our beloved readers, the writer knows that this short article will never be sufficient to disclose all the deviations of JW. This short article is meant to warn you to investigate more about groups or movements that give you the wrong signal. If you are driving, wrong signal can cause a terrific accident. In the spiritual area, wrong signal can cause the loss of your soul in eternity. May God give you wisdom and the ability to understand and accept His truth and identify the wrong signals.